

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 196816 TOSEC 200166

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SUBJECT: CONTINUING VIOLENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA -- UPDATE
AND ASSESSMENT

1. SITUATION REMAINED TENSE AFTER FOURTH DAY OF RENEWED DEMONSTRATIONS IN JOHANNESBURG'S AFRICAN TOWNSHIP OF SOWETO WHICH HAVE RESULTED SO FAR IN DEATHS OF SEVEN AFRICANS. DEMONSTRATIONS BEGAN ON AUGUST 4 LED BY STUDENTS PROTESTING ARREST OF SEVERAL OF THEIR LEADERS IN CONNECTION WITH EARLIER INCIDENTS. MOST DRAMATIC CONFRONTATIONS WITH POLICE OCCURRED AS RESULT OF SEVERAL UNSUCCESSFUL EFFORTS OF DEMONSTRATORS TO BREAK OUT OF SOWETO AND MARCH ON CENTRAL JOHANNESBURG. DEMONSTRATORS ALSO COMBINED PERSUASION, INTIMIDATION AND SABOTAGE IN EFFORTS TO PREVENT SOWETO RESIDENTS FROM GOING INTO JOHANNESBURG TO THEIR JOBS. WIDELY EFFECTIVE ON FIRST DAY, THESE TACTICS HAVE BEEN LESS SUCCESSFUL SINCE AND APPEARED TO HAVE LITTLE EFFECT BY AUGUST 6. OUTLOOK IS FOR CONTINUED ACTS OF DEFIANCE IN COMING DAYS.

2. THE ACTS OF DEFIANCE OF WHITE AUTHORITY WHICH HAVE PERSISTED SINCE THE FIRST SOWETO RIOTS IN JUNE SUGGEST
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THAT THE FEELINGS OF POWERLESSNESS WHICH HAVE BEEN

PREVALENT AMONG AFRICANS SINCE SHARPEVILLE NO LONGER EXIST, AT LEAST FOR THE YOUNGER GENERATION. THE AFRIKANS LANGUAGE ISSUE WAS ONLY A SURFACE CAUSE OF THE JUNE OUTBREAK AS IS THE PRESENT CALL FOR THE RELEASE OF DETAINEES. THE COMING OF AFRICAN RULE IN MOZAMBIQUE HAD A MAJOR PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT ON SOUTH AFRICAN BLACKS. THE DEMONSTRATION OF THE POWER OF AFRICAN LABOR IN A SERIES OF STRIKES BEGINNING IN 1975 FURTHERED THE PROCESS OF RENEWED CONFIDENCE AS DID THE INABILITY OF A WHITE SOUTH AFRICAN ARMY TO HAVE ITS WAY IN ANGOLA. THE PRESENT GENERATION OF STUDENTS, CHILDREN OF AN URBAN ELITE, FINDS THE HUMILIATION OF APARTHEID PARTICULARLY ACUTE. SOUTH AFRICA'S SEVERE RECESSION AND HIGH RATE OF BLACK UNEMPLOYMENT HAVE LONTRPVTEO PRESENT FERMENT.

3. THE VIOLENCE HAS NOT REACHED A LEVEL WHERE IT BEGINS TO THREATEN OVERALL PUBLIC ORDER IN SOUTH AFRICA; IN FACT, THE DEMONSTRATIONS ARE PRINCIPALLY LIMITED TO THE TRANSVAAL AND NATAL. THE FAILURE SINCE LAST JUNE TO FIND A WAY TO COPE WITH THESE ACTS OF DEFIANCE BY STUDENTS BRINGS TO THE FORE BASIC QUESTIONS ABOUT THE REGIME'S ABILITY TO DEAL EFFECTIVELY WITHIN THE PRESENT POLICY WITH PROBLEMS POSED BY INCREASINGLY RESTIVE URBAN BLACK AFRICANS. THERE ARE SIGNS THAT OFFICIAL PATIENCE IS WEARING THIN. IN THE IMMEDIATE OFFING WE SHOULD ANTICIPATE A SHAKE-UP IN THE GOVERNMENT'S BLACK AFRICAN ADMINISTRATION AND SOME EXTENSION OF URBAN SANITATION AND HOUSING TO BLACKS. CONTINUING VIOLENCE IS ALMOST CERTAIN TO BRING MUCH TOUGHER SECURITY MEASURES. TO DATE, HOWEVER, THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT HAS SHOWN NO INCLINATION TO MAKE FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES IN ITS RACIAL POLICIES.

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